
ISSUES/QUESTIONS FOR THE BOARD OF GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND TO ADDRESS AT THE SUNSET REVIEW HEARING

BOARD VACANCY ISSUE

ISSUE #1: This is a seven member board. At present, there are only five members sitting on the Board and terms of two of those members expired in June. At their last review, the Board also had vacancy problems.

Question #1: What is the current status of the Board's membership?

BUDGETARY ISSUES

ISSUE #2: In 1998, the Department of Consumer Affairs argued that it was more cost effective to retain the board than to abolish it. This justification was based on a projected increase in costs to the Department if they assumed the responsibilities of the Board (the Board relies on volunteer help which is not possible under a bureau structure) and the expertise available through the Board system.

Question #2: Does it continue to be fiscally prudent to keep the Board in existence?

ISSUE #3: The Board has indicated that a half-time clerical position has not been filled due to the current state of the Board's potential fund condition.

Question #3: Does the Board anticipate the need for a fee increase at this time?

LICENSURE ISSUES

ISSUE #4: The Board licenses three guide dog schools at this time and has not added any new schools for a number of years. In the past, there has been allegations that the Board has made it difficult for new schools to emerge into this arena thereby allowing a monopoly of the existing three schools.

Question #4: Does the criteria used to license guide dog schools need to be modified? Is the threshold for licensure and financial responsibility for those who wish to establish a guide dog school in California too high?

ISSUE #5: The education and experience requirements for licensure as a guide dog instructor are unique as there are no other states which license instructors. Additionally, the Board has issued only 11 new licenses for guide dog instructors since its review in 1996.

Question #5: Is it necessary for California to continue to license instructors?

ISSUE #6: During the Board's last review, the Joint Committee indicated that the one year requirement of experience working with the training of dogs, prior to becoming an employed apprentice, did not appear justified and that schools did not adhere to this requirement.

Question #6: Does the Board still require the one year of experience and do schools currently comply with this requirement?

ENFORCEMENT ISSUE

ISSUE #7: During their last review, the Board indicated that in guide dog matters, lack of professional competence most generally is revealed in the production of unsafe person/dog units, poor treatment of blind persons in training, and unprofessional behaviors/attitudes toward the blind. The board, however, does not have any statutory authorization to take disciplinary action for incompetence, gross negligence or unprofessional conduct of a licensee. It does not appear that the Board has taken any action to try and define professional competence, negligence or appropriate professional conduct of the licensee.

Question #7: What steps does the Board take to assure the competency of the instructors?

ARBITRATION PROGRAM ISSUE

ISSUE #8: The pilot project for arbitration between guide dog users and guide dog schools is scheduled to sunset on July 1, 2002.

Question #8: What has been the outcome of the pilot arbitration process? Has the project been beneficial and does it need to be extended?

SCHOOL REPORTING ISSUE

ISSUE #9: Section 7217 of the Business and Professions Code requires that schools submit the following reports to the Board annually: 1) a financial audit; and 2) a list of the number of students accepted for training, those who have completed training, and the number of dogs trained.

Question #9: Does the Board continue to receive the required reports by the schools?